



IMPACT OF SOME DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES UPON THE CONSUMER'S BUYING IMPULSIVENESS

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ABSTRACT

Impulse purchase is a booming phenomenon, observed both across the global and Indian retail market. Since it generates significant profit; marketers have tried to study the impact of various product as well as consumer characteristics on this phenomenon. In the present research, an attempt had been made to study the impact of two such demographic characteristics of consumers i.e. age and sex as well as their combined effect on impulse purchase. The study has been specifically done on Central Government officers keeping in mind their substantial increase in income after the 6th pay commission revision was implemented which merited an exclusive research focus on this particular market segment. The results showed that age had a significant impact on impulse purchase while sex did not demonstrate any such effect. Also, the interaction between these factors did not have any significant impact on buying impulsiveness. The findings of the study might prove useful to marketers who can employ these inputs while designing exclusive promotional strategies for a similar kind of market segment.

KEYWORDS: Buying Impulsiveness, Impulse Purchase, Government Officers, India

INTRODUCTION

Organized retailing in India though dates back to 'pre-independence era' has actually experienced a soaring growth from the first half of 1990's. Liberalization has allowed several domestic and foreign 'players' an easy access to Indian retail market. The face of retailing has changed since then and so are the buying habits of Indian consumers. Sinha (2003) argued that Indian customers were oriented towards shopping because of the entertainment that could be derived out of it. They seek more of the emotional value from shopping rather than

the rational value. This claim was also supported by Bajaj et al. (2005) who said that more than 60 % of purchases in an organized retail outlet were usually unplanned.

One such unplanned purchase which generates significant profit to retailers is Impulse Buying. However, it must be pointed out that not all unplanned purchases are done impulsively. Parboteeah (2005; based on Piron, 1991:512) gave a comprehensive definition which stated that, "Impulse buying is a purchase that is unplanned, the result of an exposure to a stimulus, and decided on-the-

spot. After the purchase, the customer experiences emotional and/or cognitive reactions.” The present researchers believed that the revised model of Kim’s (2003) (given later) Impulse Buying Process would present this buying behaviour most comprehensively.

From Figure 1, it can be seen that Impulse Buying process begins with in store browsing which is not pre-planned and usually the consumer has minimal product awareness before they begin browsing. As it is being done, a desire for certain products is felt by him. He makes some purchase decision i.e. either to comply with his desires or to refrain from doing it. And lastly he makes some post-purchase evaluation i.e. after he makes the purchase. All the while certain factors tend to influence the process. They are grouped as- 1.Consumer Characteristics, 2. Store Characteristics, 3. Situational Factors and 4. Product Characteristics. Research has shown that, certain demographic features like age, sex, income, etc. play an important role in influencing Impulse Purchase. For instance, Impulse Buying behaviour of consumers in the age group 18-39 shows a similarity in pattern and it decreases as age increases (WOOD, 1998). As for sex, Dittmar et al. (1995) claimed that women tend to be more impulsive than men. In their research, Beatty and Ferrel (1998) found that availability of money also determined Impulse Buying. Keeping these findings in mind, the present researchers decided to conduct the current research to find out the impact of age and sex and their interaction on the Impulsive Buying of Central Government Officers.

The review of the Census of Report of Government of India (2014) revealed that after the 6th Pay commission revision was implemented, the monthly income of the Central Government employees has increased considerably. This section experienced substantial transition in terms of their purchasing capacity and shifted their position towards the upward direction in the consumer-hierarchy. It also was found that in total, 30.87 lakhs individuals were working under the various ministries and offices of Government of India before 31st March, 2011 which implied that this big market segment whose purchasing capacity had increased significantly would generate huge profit to the retailers if they could be induced to make more frequent Impulse Purchase. Thus, keeping these perspectives in mind, the present researchers decided to study the Impulse Buying and its relation to age and sex in this particular population exclusively.

However, it must be mentioned that the present researchers found it very difficult to collect the data exactly

when the Impulse Purchase was taking place. Hence, they had collected data by administering a questionnaire on Buying Impulsiveness developed by Rook and Fisher (1995). They claimed that Buying Impulsiveness, as a consumer trait reflected a persistent tendency to “buy spontaneously, unreflectively, immediately, and kinetically.” It has been consistently documented that Impulse Purchase is largely determined by Impulse Buying Tendency (Beatty and Ferrel, 1998, Foroughi et al., 2013). Thus the present researchers believed that the Buying Impulsiveness scale would give the most accurate measure of Impulse Purchase.

OBJECTIVES

1. To see if age has any impact on buying impulsiveness of Central Government officers.
2. To see if sex has any impact on buying impulsiveness of Central Government officers.
3. To see if there is any interaction effect of age and sex on buying impulsiveness of Central Government officers.

METHODOLOGY

For the present research, the Ex-post facto approach had been followed. There were two Independent Variables whose impact was ascertained on the Dependent Variable i.e. Buying Impulsiveness or more adequately Impulse Purchase. The first Independent Variable was Age which had two levels- the young (i.e. officers whose ages were within 30-45) and elderly (i.e. officers whose ages were between 46-60). The second variable was sex which also had two levels namely, males and females. Thus, four possible combinations of groups were studied- the young male, the young female, the elderly male and the elderly female. An attempt had been made to ensure that each group had equal number of participants which was 100. The final sample constituted of 400 central Government officers (for four combinations).

The relevant variables which were controlled to possible extent were Income and Rank, Family Size, Socioeconomic Condition, Educational Qualification and Salary Condition. The 6th Pay commission report revealed that the four groups of Central Government employees (categorized on the basis of their ranks) i.e. Group-A, Group-B, Group-C and Group D employees differed substantially on their monthly income level. The present researchers reasoned that if all the four groups were studied, then income and rank might exert asymmetric influence on the sample which might confound the result. Thus, to hold the effect of income and rank relatively constant, only Group A and Group B officers were considered for the study. Although these two groups also

differed in respect of their monthly income, the researchers believed this bit of compromise was permitted since the difference between the incomes of these two groups was lesser in comparison with the other two. To control the effect of family size, only officers who had no more than 4 members in their family were included in the sample. The Socioeconomic Condition was also made constant i.e. officers belonging to middle class only were incorporated. It was also ensured that the officers had at least graduate level qualification. The present researchers believed that the period that immediately followed the salary-day might be marked off by heightened impulsive buying tendency as well as more frequent impulse purchase. To control this effect, all respondents were visited only during the first two weeks after they received their pay cheques.

The following research hypotheses were developed at the outset.

HYPOTHESES

1. Buying Impulsiveness varies according to the age of the officers.
2. Buying Impulsiveness varies according to the sex of the officers.
3. There is an impact of interaction between age and sex on buying impulsiveness of officers.

TOOL USED

Buying Impulsiveness Scale:-

The nine-item Buying Impulsiveness scale, developed by Rook and Fisher (1995) was used for the present research. Mishra et al. (2014) showed that in case of Indian population, the Cronbach's alpha measure of internal consistency of this scale came out to be .81. In another study, Kurtulus et al. (2012) showed that the Cronbach's alpha measure of this scale for Indians was .83. Thus, this scale was considered to be a true indicator of Buying Impulsiveness for the Indian population also.

SAMPLING DESIGN

Census report (Ministry of labour and employment, 2014) showed that up to 31st March, 2011, 15732 Group-A and Group B officers were working in Kolkata (UA). Among them, approximately 7048 employees were working as Group-A Officers (45 percent of the total pool of Group-A and Group-B officers) and 8684 employees were working as group-B gazetted and non-gazetted officers (55 percent of the total pool of Group-A and Group-B officers). The present researchers decided initially to select a stratified random sample of 600 officers based on the proportion of Group A and Group B officers. Thus, initially it was decided that 270 (.45 \times 600) officers from all

the four combinations of age and sex groups would be selected from Group-A. The rest 330 officers (.55 \times 600) would be similarly selected from Group B.

The census report also showed that there were approximately 30 major departments and offices of autonomous bodies working in Kolkata (UA). At the beginning, the names of those offices were arranged in the alphabetical order and serially numbered. Then following the table of random numbers 20 offices were selected. The heads of the 20 offices were contacted and 20 lists were prepared based on the data given by the heads. Each such list contained the names and contact numbers of Group-A and Group-B officers of the respective offices. It was found the in total, 9080 officers (Group-A and Group-B) were working in those 20 offices. Following the table of random numbers once again, names of 600 officers were selected (270 from Group-A and 330 from Group-B) from the 20 lists. When contacted in person, 66 of them refused to fill in the questionnaire. 84 of them had given incomplete data and thus those were discarded. Thus, in total 450 data were collected. To ensure equal number of participants in all the combinations of the age and sex levels, 50 data were discarded. Thus, the final data set contained 100 young male officers, 100 young female officers, 100 elderly male officers and 100 elderly female officers. It was also ensured that the respective proportion of Group-A and Group -B officers in the sample adhered to their respective proportion in the total population. Thus, the final sample constituted of 180 Group-A officers (.45 \times 400) and 220 Group-B officers (.55 \times 400) by employing stratified proportionate random sampling technique.

STATISTICAL DESIGN

Since, here the effect of age and sex and their interaction on buying impulsiveness were studied; the present researchers thought that a two-way Anova would suffice the purpose. Age and sex both had two levels. Thus a 2 \times 2 Anova had been done with the help of SPSS 20. But before that, to ensure the homogeneity of variances of the sample, Levene's test had been done. The results came out to be insignificant (p-value .18, See Table 2) ensuring that the variance of the selected sample did not differ from the population significantly and thus the initial sample variance could be considered to be representing the population variance.

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

The sample had been selected randomly from Group-A and Group-B officers working in the various offices within Kolkata (UA) i.e. Kolkata Urban Area.

RESULTS

The statistical analysis revealed that age of the officers made a significant impact on buying impulsiveness. The F value for this came out to be 5.326 with a p-value of .02 (See Table 3). Thus, the first hypothesis has been accepted. Inspection of table-1 revealed that the mean score of buying impulsiveness for young officers (irrespective of their sex) was 23.25 and the mean score of elderly officers (irrespective of their sex) was 21.86. Thus, it might be said that the young Government officers were higher on their buying impulsiveness than their elderly colleagues. To put it in other words, young officers would make more impulse purchases than elderly officers.

This is in line with the existing literature. The present researchers believed that the changing socio-economic scenario was one of the cardinal reasons behind this result. Firstly, now-a-days, the average age of marriage and family planning is increasing. Thus, people in their youth have more opportunities to spend their money on impulse than on necessities emanating from family needs. Besides, a large section of today's urban youth belonged to dual-earner families. Since childhood, their needs and desires were amply taken care of. Thus, for them satisfying momentary hedonic needs through impulse purchase is a 'normal' affair, relatively free from negative normative evaluation. The young Government officers are no exception. Besides, after 6th Pay commission revision was implemented, availability of disposable money for them has also increased. The purchasing capacity of the elderly officers too has increased. However, with that they would like to plan for some investments which would give them more long term benefits so that their post-retirement life would be more comfortable. Besides, the time when today's elderly people grew up valued collective interest more than individual needs. Thus, for them, the idea of Impulse Purchase might give rise to some kind of negative normative evaluation. Hence they preferred to resort to Impulse Purchase less frequently than their younger counterparts.

A look at the table 3 revealed that sex did not cast any significant impact on the buying impulsiveness of Central Government Officers. The F value for this effect came out to be .471 with a p-value of .493. Thus the second hypothesis was rejected and it might be said that male and female officers would not differ significantly in terms of impulse purchase. This contradicted some of the results of previous research (Lin and Lin, 2005; Ghani et al., 2011). The present researchers reasoned that, now-a-days employed women, specifically those working in high posts were getting more importance as decision-makers in their

were exploring some products (for instance; gadgets) which traditionally had been designated as 'men's cup of tea' and during such exploration, they were developing affinity for those durables. Today, it is very frequently observed that women are spending time and money on buying gadgets than before. Men also experienced similar changes. For example, today they hardly mind spending on fairness creams and cosmetic products. Thus, it might be said that the traditional compartmentation between 'Impulse Purchase Product only for men' and 'Impulse Purchase Product only for women' was blurring. Besides, because of increasing women's employment, they too have more disposable money to spend. Thus, the difference between men and women in respect of impulse purchase is losing its prominence. In a study by Badgaiyan and Verma, (2014), it was found that though intrinsic variables like personality, culture, shopping enjoyment tendency, materialism and impulsive buying tendency significantly predicted impulse purchase, such influence did not vary across males and females.

Table 3 also revealed that, the combined effect of age and sex could not create significant impact on buying impulsiveness of male and female officers. The F value for this effect came out to be .015 with a p-value of .90. Thus, the third hypothesis was also rejected which meant that sex did not interact with age in creating significant effect on impulse purchase of Central Government officers.

SUGGESTIONS

In the present research, the impact of only two demographic variables on Impulse Purchase had been studied. The effect of Income had been held constant. However, there were some other variables for example, culture, mood, affect, group influence, normative influence, store layout, promotional strategies whose effect on buying impulsiveness have to be studied among the Central Government Officers so that marketers can make more effective promotional designs to nurture more frequent impulse purchase. Besides, the difference between the impulse buying habits of Government employees and private sector employees also needs to be done to reach higher precision while making advertisement campaigns.

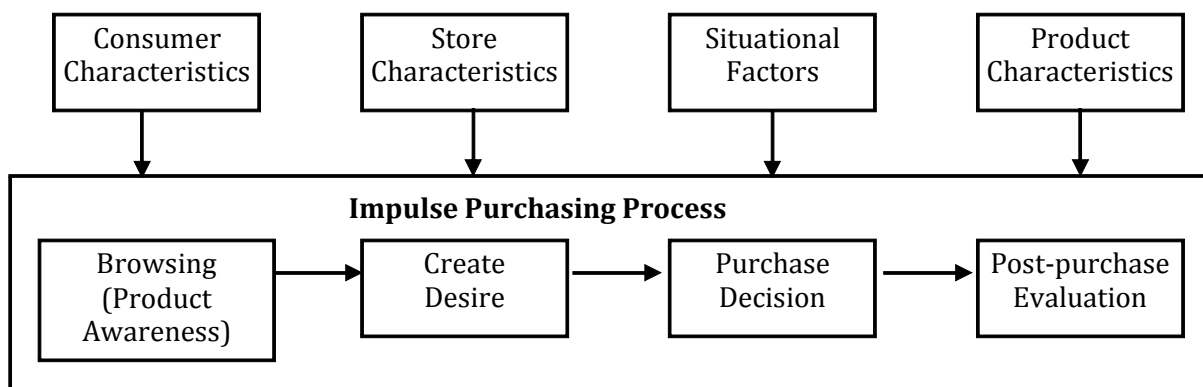
CONCLUSION

An attempt was made to decipher the impact of age and sex on impulse purchase among Central Government officers. The results indicated that young officers were significantly more prone than elderly officers to Impulse Purchase indicating that age created a significant impact on it. But, sex failed to elicit any such difference. Also, age and sex did not interact with each other to create statistically significant impact on Impulse

Purchase. However, certain other variables which were left outside the purview of the present research needed to be given attention so that a more precise picture of Impulse Purchase among the Central Government officers could be made.

FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1:-



A Model of Impulse Purchasing Process

Source : Adapted from Kim, 2003

Table - 1 Descriptive Statistics

Dependent variable : buying impulsiveness				
Age	Sex	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
30-45	Female	23.42	6.960	100
	Male	23.08	5.889	100
	Total	23.25	6.433	200
40-60	Female	22.10	5.506	100
	Male	21.61	5.719	100
	Total	21.86	5.605	200
Total	Female	22.76	6.294	200
	Male	22.35	5.837	200
	Total	22.55	6.066	400

Table - 2 Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances^a

Dependent variable : buying impulsiveness			
F	df1	df2	Sig.
1.646	3	396	.178

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variances of the Dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design : Intercept+age+sex+age* sex

Dependent variable : buying impulsiveness						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig	Partial Eta squared
Corrected Model	212.387 ^a	3	70.796	1.938	.123	.014
Intercept	203446.102	1	203446.102	5568.276	.000	.934
Age	194.603	1	194.603	5.326	.022	.013
Sex	17.222	1	17.222	.471	.493	.001
Age * sex	.563	1	.563	.015	.901	.000
Error	14468.510	396	36.537			
Total	218127.000	400				
Corrected Total	14680.897	399				

a. R. Squared = .014 (Adjusted R. Squared = .007)

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